

SECONDARY

PSSA

24.10.00 (1)

(1)

PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS – PEDAGOGICAL INSPECTIONS

(No. B/105) Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North & Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education & Scientific Research whether he will say if, following amendments to the Education Act, pedagogical inspections have been carried out in private secondary schools and, if not, why not.

Mr Obcegadoo: Mr Speaker, Sir, as the hon. gentleman may be aware, an amendment to the Education Act was proposed by the previous Government and passed by the House in July of this year by virtue of which pedagogical inspection of private schools was made the responsibility of the Ministry of Education as opposed to the PSSA. Accordingly, the officers of the PSSA being no longer legally empowered to carry out such inspections have refrained from doing so since July 2000.

In fact, I am advised that since then no pedagogical inspection has been carried out by the PSSA Inspectors in Private Secondary Schools.

This most unsatisfactory state of affairs has resulted from inadequate planning and delayed setting up of the National Inspectorate under the previous Government. I am grateful to the hon. Member for highlighting the present state of affairs and wish to assure him that the whole concept of the National Inspectorate is being revisited and its setting up is urgently looked into.

Secondary (2)
PSSA

17/7/01

(2)

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SECONDARY SCHOOLS (SUB STANDARD) - GRADING

(No. B/539) Mr M. Chumroo (First Member for Port Louis North and Montagne Longue) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether in regard to so-called sub standard secondary schools, he will (a) circulate a list thereof indicating the criteria which determines such grading (b) state whether any MEDCO school falls in this category and (c) say what remedial action is envisaged.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, I am arranging for a list of sub-standard secondary schools as well as the criteria used for so classifying these schools to be circulated (**Appendix I**). According to information now provided by the PSSA, this list and criteria date back to 1989, that is following the last MAB report on the Private Secondary Education Sector. After discussions with the Federation of Managers of Private Secondary Schools, in June of this year, it has been decided that the Management Audit Bureau (MAB) be requested to carry out a review exercise on the sub-standard schools as well as the criteria used therefor. Once the results of the said review exercise are obtained, appropriate action will be considered in consultation with all stakeholders.

As regards part (b) of the question, there are no MEDCO schools which fall within the list of sub-standard schools of 1989.

D21P06CO5
(No. B/539) contd.

As the House is already aware, the education reform proposed for the secondary sector mentions the fact that MEDCO schools will be upgraded in line with our standard policy of parity of esteem for all State owned schools. Measures are being taken in that direction, beginning with an assessment of the state of infrastructure of MEDCO secondary schools.

Mr Duval: Mr Speaker, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the list that is being circulated includes how the past rate at CPE has evolved over the years?

Mr Obegadoo: I understand, Mr Speaker, that the criteria used following the MAB 1999 report consists of the student population of the school, whether or not it is housed in a rented building, the evolution in school population, School Certificate results as mentioned by the hon. gentleman, the educational and recreational facilities available or not and the state of industrial relations within the school.

Mr Duval: I wanted to know whether the rates are being provided in the list that is being circulated.

Mr Obegadoo: It was not requested in the Parliamentary Question, but, of course, if the hon. gentleman wants to put a question next time, I shall do so.

Mr Duval: To save the time of the House, the hon. Minister could consider it now.

Mr Obegadoo: Unfortunately, such information is not available at present.

D05/W04/mt/3

BOOK LOAN SCHEME - BENEFICIARIES

(No. A/6) Mrs F. Labelle (Second Member for Beau Bassin and Petite Rivière) asked the Minister of Social Security, National Solidarity, Senior Citizen Welfare and Reform Institutions whether, in regard to the book loan scheme, he will state -

- (a) the number of beneficiaries;
- (b) the amount of money disbursed and,
- (c) as from which date the scheme was activated for year 2002.

Reply: In regard to the book loan scheme -

- (a) the number of beneficiaries is 5,662;
 - (b) the amount of money disbursed is R 2,426,130.30 (18,116 books), and
 - (c) the scheme was activated on file on 15 November 2001.
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1st July, 2003

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(4)

D24P06CO7

**PRB REPORT - RETIRED EMPLOYEES -
PENSIONS**

(No. B/446) Mr S. Sakaram (Second Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Scientific Research whether, in keeping with the policy of aligning the conditions of service of employees of private secondary schools with those prevailing in the public sector, he will state if Government, whenever the recommendations of the PRB are implemented, intends readjusting pensions in payment to retired employees on the basis of the salary scale recommended by the PRB and applicable to Government employees.

Mr Obeegadoo: Sir, it is a fact that PRB has recommended the alignment of conditions of service, with the exception of pensions, in the private secondary schools sector with those of the State secondary schools sector. With regard to pensions, the PRB recommendation is as follows, I quote -

"As regards pension, the present arrangements for both teaching and non-teaching staff of Private Secondary Schools should continue".

I am informed that in the Civil Service, pensions are in accordance with the Pension Act and Pension Regulations 1951. The Civil Service Pension Scheme is a non contributory one and the PRB has in fact recommended that, I quote -

"Pensions of retired public officers be recomputed on the basis of the revised pensionable emoluments as from 01 July 2003."

The pensions scheme for the Private Secondary Schools is an altogether different one, and is contributory in the ratio of 2:1, State contributing two thirds and the employee contributing one third. Private Secondary Schools' employees as opposed to Civil Servants are in addition covered by the National Pension Scheme. Further, private secondary schools' employees also have a separate private pension scheme. Both schemes being contributory have their own rules and regulations in terms of contributions and benefits.

D24P06CO7
PQ No. B/446 (contd)

The extension of the PRB recommendations for Civil Service Pension Scheme to the private secondary schools employees would have far reaching policy implications, would have enormous financial implications and would be fraught with practical difficulties. Moreover, Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I wish to invite the attention of the hon. gentleman to the fact that the private secondary schools' employees remain to all intents and purposes private employees and do enjoy certain benefits not enjoyed by public servants, for instance, active participation in party politics.

In any case, Sir, as the House is aware, Government has initiated an overall review of our pension systems.

YEAR 2007

SECONDARY SCHOOLS - REGISTRATION 2007 – INSPECTIONS (10/04/07)

(No. B/119) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the registration of secondary schools for the year 2007, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to whether inspections have been carried out and, if so –

- (a) during which period;
- (b) by whom, and
- (c) the number of secondary schools inspected.

Reply: Registration of private secondary schools is normally carried out between May and September each year and such registration is normally based on the information already available on file and in the application form as well as appraisal made by the supervisor throughout the year/ or a comprehensive assessment exercise carried out by a panel of supervisors between May and September each year. The Board of the PSSA then approves registration on the basis of these recommendations.

I am informed that for the purpose of the registration exercise of these schools in 2007, the PSSA carried out the comprehensive inspection of 81 out of 98 grant aided schools between June and October 2006. The Board of the PSSA approved their registration on the strength of this exercise and the continuous assessment.

The registration of the 19 other schools was also approved by the PSSA on the basis of available information and report of its supervisors throughout the year as I explained earlier. I am also informed that these schools are of high standard and have very good infrastructure and educational facilities. The decision of the Board of the PSSA was also guided by the excellent review obtained by these schools in the assessment carried out in 2006.

SCHOOLS – RESUMPTION OF STUDIES, REGISTRATION, ETC.

4/12/07

(No. B/1294) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether in regard to the resumption of studies in the primary and secondary schools for the year 2008, he will state if –

- (a) he has held any meeting with the different Unions concerning their grievances, if any, and
- (b) obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to whether it has been advised of the closing down of any private secondary school.

Reply: As an integral part of the ongoing educational reforms programme, there are standing arrangements for officials of my Ministry who act specifically as Desk Officers for different subject areas to meet Trade Unions both on a regular and an *ad hoc* basis to sort out industrial relation issues. The process works out well and it is only as a matter of last resort when there is a dead lock i.e when a particular trade Union and the official side are unable to progress towards a satisfactory solution to an outstanding problem that the Minister steps in to exceptionally meet that trade union.

I am informed that meetings have been held on a regular basis with all recognized trade unions of the Education Sector and at which all outstanding issues are transacted including those related to resumption of studies which any trade Union may wish to raise.

Independently of these meetings, my Ministry has been working since 2006 on a set programme for resumption of studies in order to plan, coordinate and ensure smooth implementation of the various activities. The House will appreciate that the resumption of studies in 2006 and 2007 were neither "houleuse" nor "chaude". On the basis of planning and forecast, the January 2008 resumption of studies is not likely to be different but if there are problems which crop up at any point in time these will be addressed accordingly. For the January 2008 resumption of studies a final presentation of arrangements/activities was made at the Ministry on 14 October 2007. It is precisely on the basis of this programme that it has been

possible to complete the exercise for the transfer of Primary School teachers, for the first time, in mid-November instead of as late as beginning of January as it used to be in the past. Similarly, a number of initiatives are being taken like for example the briefing session for the "Bridging the Gap" project for all Standard I teachers.

As regards part (b) of the question, the reply is in the negative. I am informed by the PSSA that all the grant-aided private secondary schools which were in operation in 2007 have been re-registered for the academic year 2008 although some of them which are compliant to only 50% of the requirements have been registered provisionally and will be requested to upgrade their facilities in the course of next year. The PSSA is closely monitoring the situation.

PSSA –

BOARD MEETING – WALKOUT (15/04/08)

(No. B/259) Mrs F. Labelle (Third Member for Vacoas and Floreal) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if, at its meeting of 02 April 2008, some members of the Board effected a walkout and, if so, the reasons therefor.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, with your permission, I shall answer to both PQs B/259 and B/278 together as they relate to the same issue. Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, I was informed that at the last meeting of the Board of the Private Secondary School Authority held on 02 April 2008, a few members effected a walkout as a sign of protest relating to the following issues -

- (a) the recording of the discussions at the Board level;
- (b) adjustment of salaries of supervisors at the PSSA, and
- (c) approval for Private Secondary Schools to run HSC classes.

Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, it is not uncommon for members of Boards of parastatal bodies and companies to have diverging views on issues under consideration and as the proceedings of the Boards of the parastatal bodies are regulated by themselves, there are set procedures which are inbuilt in these Board proceedings to resolve diverging views.

It is, therefore, imperative for Board Members, in the context of good governance, to adhere to the procedures and ensure that there is no conflict of interest between their individual role as either a trade unionist or a School Manager or on the basis of personal equations and their corporate responsibilities as a Board Member.

In the circumstance, a walkout serves no useful purpose and on the contrary adversely affects the smooth running of the Authority in that decisions are delayed. I am informed by the PSSA that another Board meeting has been scheduled for tomorrow Wednesday 16 April, 2008 and the issues at stake can be addressed at that meeting of the Board.

Mrs Labelle: Mr Speaker, Sir, may I ask the hon. Minister whether the members of the Board were protesting against the fact that decisions of the Board have been altered or overruled.

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, as I stated, when the Minutes are presented, if there are representations to be made about the Minutes, these should be raised at the level of the Board. There are procedures to handle such situations at the Board level.

Mr Jugnauth: Can I know from the Minister whether it is not the truth that the Board having taken decisions on two occasions not to grant certain things to certain persons or institutions, the Minister, without informing the Board, himself has overruled the Board's decision and granted the request to the institution or to a particular person?

Mr Gokhool: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, the PSSA Board Act is clear with regard to the powers of the Minister and I would read the relevant section to the powers of the Minister which the Minister is expected to exercise in certain circumstances.

“Section 9 – powers of the Minister

The Minister may, in relation to the exercise of his functions by the Board give such directions to the Board as he considers necessary in the public interest and the Board shall comply with those directions.”

Mr Jugnauth: The Minister accepts that the reasons for the walkout of the Board members were as a result of the overturning of the decisions by the hon. Minister of the decision that the Board had taken. Is that the correct feeling?

Mr Gokhool: There might be misinterpretation. Because when the Board has its deliberations, matters are referred to the Ministry and to the Minister for approval. I cannot just sign without verifying that everything is being done in order. I am exercising the powers which are vested upon me by the law.

Mr Jugnauth: Mr Deputy Speaker, Sir, can I ask the hon. Minister, during the last few months, how many Board's decisions he has overruled?

Mr Gokhool: I think that these powers cannot be exercised indiscriminately. I cannot remember how many occasions, but I know that I have to exercise these powers when it is justified. In such cases where they are justified, I am going to use my powers.

Mr Bhagwan: Can the Minister confirm the House that a majority of the Board members effected a walkout and that there was no quorum after they have left?

Mr Gokhool: If there is no quorum, the meeting will stop. It is as simple as that.

Mr Bhagwan: Will the hon. Minister confirm that it is the majority of the members left the Board meeting.

Mr Gokhool: There was a walkout and the meeting did not continue. As far as quorum is concerned, I have to check. But the meeting did not continue after the walkout.

Mr Lesjongard: Mr Deputy Speaker, from what I heard from the hon. Minister, may I understand that the Minister is selective in using his powers as per the law and that he has chosen not to act when we have torrential rains in this country?

The Deputy Speaker: That has nothing to do with the question!

PSSA – BOARD MEETING – WALKOUT (15/04/08)

(No. B/278) Mr A. Jugnauth (First Member for Quartier Militaire & Moka) asked the Minister of Education & Human Resources whether, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the PSSA, information as to if, at its meeting of 02 April 2008, several members of the Board thereof effected a walkout and, if so, the reasons therefor.

(Vide reply to PQ No. B/259)

PSSA - COMMUNIQUÉ - PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

6/27/08
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(No. B/403) Mr G. Guinness (Third Member for Montagne Blanche and GRSE) asked the Minister of Education and Human Resources whether, in regard to the proposed strike of the employees of the private secondary schools, he will, for the benefit of the House, obtain from the Private Secondary Schools Authority, information as to if the Authority had issued a communiqué dated 22 April 2008 which was addressed to all the employees of the private secondary schools and, if so, indicate --

- (a) the content thereof, and
- (b) the reasons therefor.

The Minister of Local Government (Dr. J. B. David): Mr Speaker, Sir, I am informed by the PSSA that the reply is in the affirmative. I am tabling a copy of the communiqué which sets out the reason therefor, the main one being that schools should not be disrupted at the beginning of the second term.

Mr Guinness: Can the hon. Minister inform us as to why the PSSA stated in the communiqué: 'it would appear that the motive of the president of UPSEE is a more political one'? This is not the first time. Can I know on what the PSSA based itself to make such a statement?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, the question is: whether the PSSA has issued a communiqué. The answer is yes. What is the content of that communiqué? I have tabled the communiqué and the content gives the reasons.

Mr Guinness: May I know on what does the PSSA base itself to state in the content that this is a political one?

Mr Speaker: There is a question.

Dr. David: The question, Mr Speaker, Sir, what is referred to in the PQ. The reasons are given, it is not for me to comment the reasons. I can table the communiqué.

(Interruptions)

Mr Speaker: Hon. Bundhoo, Order!

Mr Guinness: The PSSA being not the employer, can I know from the hon. Minister how can it be that the PSSA in this case, addressed itself directly to the employees and not through managers?

Dr. David: Mr Speaker, Sir, this is not part of the question. The question is: whether a communiqué has been issued. Yes, a communiqué has been issued.

Mr Speaker: The Minister can answer or not, that is his own prerogative. I cannot force him to answer a question. There is a communiqué; the Minister has answered, he has laid a copy on the Table. The hon. Member is questioning him on the content of the communiqué. In my view, this is a relevant question. If the Minister does not want to answer, that is a different question.

(Interruptions)

Dr. David: The answer is in the communiqué, Mr Speaker, Sir.